

THE M. C. A. ADVISORY

An Occasional Publication of Medal Collectors of America, Oct. 1998.
M.C.A. - Members Sharing an Interest in Art & Historical Medals

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

By David Thomason Alexander

Tessera Melioris Aevi, Token of a Better Age, a fitting slogan for the health and expansion of medal collecting! Thirty-five enthusiastic collectors gathered in Room B110 of Portland Convention Center on Thursday, August 6 to launch **Medal Collectors of America, MCA**. Since I have been appointed President and Editor *pro tempore*, I will take this opportunity to record the birth of what we all hope will be the first successful broadly based organization **OF AND FOR COLLECTORS OF ART AND HISTORICAL MEDALS**.

Helpfully placed in the convention calendar by ANA Convention Director Ruthann Brettell, our meeting was called to order at 3:10 PM and was a lively, convivial yet decisive gathering. All present were invited to introduce themselves, say a few words about their collecting specialties and share their views on the need for a new organization, its future name and activities.

The meeting made several important decisions as it launched the new group. First was the selection of a name. It was moved and seconded that **Medal Collectors of America** be adopted as a short, descriptive title easily abbreviated to **MCA**. A provisional designation, "Art and Historical Medal Collectors" appeared on the ANA schedule, but a shorter name seemed desirable. New member Paul Bosco pointed to the ambiguity of the word "Medal" without qualifiers, citing the widespread public perception that "a medal is something to hang on your chest." However, as no inclusive alternative term suggested itself, **MCA** was adopted.

Initial dues were set at \$20 and virtually all present filled out turned in application forms with either cash or checks for this amount. It was agreed that MCA membership be open to collectors interested in either American or world art and historical medals. MCA's main thrust will be toward collectors and research, leaving the art of medallic sculpture and the pursuit of military decorations.

The members agreed that MCA should launch a quality publication devoted to medal research and organization news as soon as practicable. Several members have volunteered to provide articles, some of which are already written but waiting for a suitable venue for publication.

Steering Committee Elected

To expedite the creation of a journal, preparation of a constitution and by-laws and other basics of a successful organization, the meeting elected a Steering Committee of four: David T. Alexander (Mahopac, N.Y.), Paul Bosco (New York City), Michael J. Hodder (Wolfeboro, N.H.) and R.W. Julian (Logansport, Ind.). This committee met on Saturday, Aug. 8 and decided some important questions. David T. Alexander was appointed President-Editor *pro tem*. The new journal will accept paid advertising to help defray the cost of publication.

Continuing Progress

Additional matters have been discussed since the ANA convention. The Steering Committee of MCA has decided to take out a club membership in the ANA. Our new organization will avoid the use of membership numbers, but if membership cards are issued, the year of acceptance to membership will appear, with an initial 'C' distinguishing charter members joining during 1998.

Publication on the Drawing Board

MCA is planning a high quality periodical, to be called *THE MEDAL CABINET*. Frequency of publication will depend entirely on the volume and quality of member submissions. Articles have already been promised by several members who have been waiting for the right venue for their work. If our members come up with sufficient quality articles, there is a good possibility that the first number can be prepared in calendar 1998 or early 1999. To assure this, I ask that each member with an article contact me at the earliest moment! Call me at (212) 582-2580 days, or (914) 628-7535 evenings before 10 PM. In this connection, MCA will establish a literary-service award to recognize excellence in writing, research and dedication to our organization. This will be named the *Carl W.A. Carlson Award*, in honor of one of the great pioneers in medal research and cataloguing.

Carl's articles in *The Numismatist* touched on many areas of medallic interest. He served for several years as curator of the Garrett Collection at the Johns Hopkins University's Evergreen House, and was later a cataloguer for Paramount, NASCA, HIM Inc. and Stack's. His work for NASCA's auction of the great Kessler-Spangenberg Collection set a new standard for quality research-cataloguing. He was later the ANA Historian and co-editor of the *ANA Centennial Anthology* in 1991.

Membership is the key to MCA's success. We ask each of our founding members to recruit friends and associates in the world of medals. A membership application is enclosed with this newsletter, and we can supply more as needed.

Please feel free to contact me at any time through our mailing address, P.O. Box 780, Mahopac NY 10541. Again, if you may contact me during the working day at Stack's, (212) 582-2580; evenings at (914) 628-7535.

David T. Alexander, President-Editor

Thanks Are In Order

Our organizational meeting was made possible by the cooperation of ANA Convention Director Ruthann Brettell, who got us onto the convention calendar at relatively short notice and assured of a room assignment. We are most grateful for this valued assistance.

Lawrence R. Stack of Stack's-Coin Galleries has been an enthusiastic supporter of MCA in its founding stages. His donation covered the cost of the coffee served at the organizational meeting, and he also presented MCA with a supply of Stack's bronze Brasher Doubloon Medal struck for the New York ANA convention. Each member is receiving a specimen of this historic medal with this issue of *The MCA Advisory*.

Jim Miller, publisher of COINage magazine, Ventura, California, requested a full-scale article on the state of the medal today and the effects of MCA on medal collecting in the future. Editors Ed Reiter and Kari Stone gave hearty encouragement to this project and we are sending a copy of the November issue to each of our new members.

ANA Past President Florence Schook presented three specimens of the Monroe (Michigan) Coin Club's medal honoring ANA Founder Dr. George Francis Heath, as the *Fons et Origio* of the national organization. Thanks to all these initial benefactors!

Collector Profile: David T. Alexander

Someone at our first meeting that some of us share our recollections of our medal collecting careers. To start the ball rolling, I'll offer a personal memoir. My late brother John Leonard Alexander (1938-1987) started the family medal collection, falling under the spell of medals before I did. We became coin collectors on Dec. 23, 1949, the day after our family moved to Miami, Florida, from New York City. Our new next-door neighbor gave us two Colombian five-centavo coins, and I have remained an enthusiastic collector of world coins ever since.

We obtained our first medal appeared about three years later, a 110mm bronze German medal issued in 1929, portraying aviation pioneer Dr. Engineer Claudius Dornier and commemorating the successful take-off of his massive flying boat, the DO-X. My memory was that the DO-X had 10 engines, but MCA member David Sklow of Rocky River, Ohio, pointed out at the organizational meeting that it actually boasted 12. You can't fool a true medal collector!

We spotted the Dornier medal in the window of Wilson's Pawn and Bail Bonds near the Dade County court house in downtown Miami. It remained there several months until we collected enough deposit bottles to meet Wilson's asking price, something around \$5.00. Seen up close it was a marvel, showing the huge airplane, a *TRIUMPH DEUTSCHER TECHNIK*, *Triumph of German Technology*, taking off across the Atlantic with a crew of 169 men. This medal is number 169 in Gunther W. Kienast's definitive catalogue, *The Medals of Karl Goetz*, Artus Co., Cleveland, Ohio, 1967.

Kienast catalogues this issued in 110mm cast Bronze, 36mm struck Silver and 22.5mm struck Gold. In 1953, however, none of this information was available to inquiring youngsters but the medal itself posed enough questions to spark a lifelong interest. In refreshing contrast to most of our coins it was BIG! It bore the designer's name, K. GOETZ, and the edge identified the maker as BAYER. HAUPTMUNZAMT, which we learned was the Bavarian State Mint in Munich, an institution I was able to visit as a *Coin World* staffer 24 years later.

Bail bondsman-pawnbroker Wilson was a little old man with plentiful male pattern baldness and scant patience with pesky youngsters or anyone else. He was an unlikely mentor and luckily we never needed any of his other services. Thanks to him, however, historical medals were now fixed in our minds.

In 1956 I had a summer job collecting long overdue books for the Brooklyn Public Library, pounding the pavements at 75 cents per hour trying to recover thousands of books absent from the shelves for 18 months or more. With 'foreign' coins still available at five cents each in dealer junk boxes, this was great pay.

The job ended, and I was at liberty to explore the city. I first entered the hallowed precincts of the American Numismatic Society at 155 Street and Broadway in upper Manhattan and was fascinated by a major exhibit on the Society of Medalists, then in its 56th year of issuing two "art-for-art's sake" medals. I was especially fascinated by Carl Paul Jennewein's Fame and Glory medal with its cicada symbolizing shrill, self-advertising FAMA contrasting with an innocent cherub, GLORIA.

For me the art medal had arrived. Today I have all SOM medals from 1930 through the mid-1980's. As an excuse to collect additional pieces, I collected pieces showing the spectrum of color changes in such artificially patinated issues as Paul Manship's *Hail to Dionysus Medal* of 1930 that was still being struck as late as 1976. I even sought out varieties of edge markings and other fascinating minutiae of these highest quality modern art medals.

Working as a full time medal cataloguer for Johnson & Jensen in the early 1980's gave me a remarkable overview of the entire medal field and an immediate understanding of the woefully inadequate existing medal literature. I catalogued medals as a free lancer from 1983 until I joined Stack's and Coin Galleries in 1991. I have handled a wealth of fine and varied material including the Paul Magriel Washingtoniana collection, selections from the Virgil Brand estate and much more. I have tried to make my writing in the field a worthwhile

addition to the literature, especially my *Coin World* column, "The Research Desk."

Through some 40 years of continuing interest, I never ceased to wonder why there was no effective specialty group serving the needs of medal collectors such as myself. Now, we all fervently hope, there will be!

A Busy Future: No Lack of Projects

MCA's future is wide open. There is no lack of meaningful projects for a dedicated membership. Some ideas: **Medallic Vocabulary**. Think of the many terms we use that are carry-overs from the study of coins, but are not necessarily well fitted to medals. **Uncirculated**. Medals were never meant to circulate, and the root of this handy word is unrelated to the medal. **Restrike**. This coin term has pejorative meaning, especially for collectors of U.S. coins who recall the merry antics of the 19th century United States Mint. The word is simply unsuited to medals. **Continuing Issue or Later Strike** might more adequately cover such issues as the Copper bronzed U.S. Mint medals of various series, not to mention continuing strikes of the Paris and Vienna Mints or the vexed question of dating the long series of Papal Medals tackled some years ago by Dr. John Varriano. Those medallic issues are essentially open-ended, their striking taking place over decades or centuries.



MEDAL COLLECTORS OF AMERICA
PO BOX 780
MAHOPAC, NY 10541

Membership Application

Date: _____

Name: _____

Mailing: (Street) _____

Address: (City) _____ (State) _____ (Zip) _____

Telephone: (Work) _____ (Home) _____

E-mail: _____

(over)

Research and Publication. Why is the only general catalogue of **Abraham Lincoln Medals** still that of Robert King of the 1920's? **Napoleonic Medals** have inspired many a collector but why is an obscure Franco-Danish listing, the legendary but seldom available Bramsen catalogue still quoted in lieu of a modern, "living" reference to this great series? What of **Franklin, Lafayette, U.S. Political or Exposition Medals**? Remember the **Bicentennial**? What a pity that while there was a \$30,000 grant available just after that event for a Bicentennial medal catalogue that no person or agency stepped forward to do the job.

Imagine the fascination of a carefully prepared catalogue of **U.S. Numismatic Organization Medals**, those struck by such major organizations as ANA, ANS, TAMS, NLG, state and regional bodies such as the California State Numismatic Association, quality local club efforts such as the New York Numismatic Club, Rochester Numismatic Society or Chicago Coin Club.

Martin Luther and Reformation Medals are still best served by the C.E. Bullova-Spink auction catalogue of the great collection of Prof. Robert B. Whiting. What about an indepth update on **U.S. Presidential Inaugural Medals** to carry on the great work of Richard Dusterberg, H. Joseph Levine and Neil MacNeil?

All great projects, I'm sure you'll agree. Very possibly you already have one or more pet ideas or projects already underway. A primary goal of MCA should be helping all such worthy efforts with all its resources. I am sure we will do so!



COLLECTING INTERESTS

U. S. Medals

Specialties: (Indian Peace, So-called Dollars, etc)

World and Art Medals

Specialties:

I would like to see the following highlighted in the MCA publication:

Volunteers: I am willing to devote time to the following MCA projects: